

# UCLA Faculty Association

News and opinion from Dan Mitchell since 2009

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Wednesday, December 18, 2024

## UC Union News









From the [Daily Cal](#): On Friday, Academic Student Employees, or ASEs, of the UAW 4811 completed their ratification vote, deciding 79.8% in favor of approving an agreement to extend the union's contract. UAW 4811 is the union representing the 48,000 academic workers across the UC system. "We see (the contract extension agreement) as very promising, and clearly the vast majority of our membership agrees given the margin of the vote," Tanzil Chowdhury, the statewide ASE chair for UAW 4811 said. "I think it puts us in a strong

position, and we're excited to get to the table in July to start hammering out that new contract."

The contract extension means that the contract will now expire on Dec. 31, 2025, instead of their original date of May 31, 2025. The agreement also includes a 4% raise for academic student employees and a transitional funding pilot program. The UAW 4811 bargaining team initially reached a tentative agreement with the university on Nov. 15. The union vote to ratify the agreement took place between Dec. 3 and Dec. 6...

Full story at [https://www.dailycal.org/news/uc/uaw-4811-votes-to-extend-contract-with-uc/article\\_739a5254-b842-11ef-8f2e-070fd45bf4e9.html](https://www.dailycal.org/news/uc/uaw-4811-votes-to-extend-contract-with-uc/article_739a5254-b842-11ef-8f2e-070fd45bf4e9.html).

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:      

Labels: UC

Tuesday, December 17, 2024

## State still ahead on receipts

The latest monthly cash report from the state controller shows receipts through November during the current fiscal year. For the first five months of the year, receipts came in ahead of forecast values to the tune of \$3.9 billion, mainly due to the income tax and the corporation tax. For just the month of November, receipts were below forecast values but this gap appears to be due to the fact that Thanksgiving came at the end of the month. Thus, withholding payments for that period will likely show up in early December.









The going hypothesis is that the extra revenue is coming from the high tech sector and capital gains therein.

Unused borrowable resources stood at over \$93 billion. Not all of that cash can be used to deal with deficits on an annual basis. But it can be used to cover monthly imbalances within the fiscal year.

The controller's report for November is at <https://sco.ca.gov/Files-ARD/CASH/November2024StatementofGeneralFundCashReceiptsandDisbursements.pdf>.

There is a sense that despite the \$3.9 billion in unexpected receipts, the budgetary outlook for UC will be constrained. But what the governor will propose and what the legislature will do remains to be seen. The budget process is not over 'til it's over (in June).

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:      

Labels: controller, governor, legislature, State Budget, UC budget crisis

### The Council of UC Faculty Associations

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- MLA and BDS 3: Letter from Current and Former Members of the MLA Committee on Academic Freedom and Professional Rights and Responsibilities to MLA Executive Director and Executive Council on Blocking the Debate - 12/30/2024
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### Topics

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Subway Work



Wilshire Bl near UCLA: Storm Drain Work, Sewer and Catch Basin Work

Summary

Metro contractors will continue working on the storm drain laterals, sewer lines, and catch basin activities for the future Westwood/UCLA Station. Work will be done in phases with lane closures on Wilshire Bl between Veteran Av and Westwood Bl Utility services will be maintained.

Work on the sewer and catch basins has been ongoing. The temporary traffic control will require restrictions to eastbound lanes on Wilshire Bl between Veteran Av and Westwood Bl.

Date:

Ongoing through Winter 2024

Work hours:

Monday to Friday, 9 pm to 6 am and 9 am to 3:30 pm

Continuous Weekends, Friday to Monday, 9 pm to 6 am

Traffic Control:



- Wilshire Bl will have lane reductions for eastbound and westbound traffic between Westwood Bl and Veteran Av.
- Left turns may be closed at different times at Gayley Av and Westwood Bl.
- Some intermittent crosswalk closures may be implemented. Three crosswalks will be open at each intersection at all times.

Noteworthy:

- All work will receive the necessary permits and approvals.
- Access to driveways, residences & businesses will always be maintained unless notified in advance.
- Access for pedestrians will be maintained outside of construction zones.
- Access for the Fire Department and emergency responders will be maintained.
- Parking restrictions will be implemented in the immediate area of the work zone.
- Construction is dynamic and schedules are subject to change.
- 24/7 Hotline: 213-922-6934

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Source: [https://cloud.sfmtc.metro.net/GayleyAvandWilshireBl\\_StormDrainWork](https://cloud.sfmtc.metro.net/GayleyAvandWilshireBl_StormDrainWork).

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:20 AM No comments:      

Labels: [traffic](#), [UCLA](#)

Monday, December 16, 2024

Are the things to come already here?

From [UCLA Newsroom](#):

Comparative lit class will be first in Humanities Division to use UCLA-developed AI system

Textbook for Zrinka Stahuljak's winter 2025 course is generated by the Kudu platform

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Contributors

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Sean Brenner

Zrinka Stahuljak's comparative literature course next quarter will cover much of the same subject matter she has taught in years past: a sweeping survey of writing from the Middle Ages to the 17th century. But, thanks to AI, the course format and materials will take on a totally new look for 2025.

Comp Lit 2BW will be the first course in the UCLA College Division of Humanities to be built around the Kudu artificial intelligence platform. \* The textbook: AI-generated. Class assignments: AI-generated. Teaching assistants' resources: AI-generated. While that might make it sound like Stahuljak is ceding her wide-ranging expertise to bots, she said the opposite is true. The new technology, she said, will have immediate tangible benefits for her, teaching assistants and — critically —

students.

"Because the course is a survey of literature and culture, there's an arc to what I want students to understand," said Stahuljak, a professor of comparative literature and of European languages and transcultural studies. "Normally, I would spend lectures contextualizing the material and using visuals to demonstrate the content. But now all of that is in the textbook we generated, and I can actually work with students to read the primary sources and walk them through what it means to analyze and think critically."

Because Stahuljak can focus on those aspects of teaching during lectures, TAs would in turn be liberated from those tasks and can instead devote more time to helping students with writing assignments — an element of instruction that sometimes receives short shrift in large classes, she said. Another benefit, Stahuljak said, is that the platform can help professors ensure consistent delivery of course material. Now that her teaching materials are organized into a coherent text, another instructor could lead the course during the quarters when Stahuljak isn't teaching — and offer students a very similar experience. And with AI-generated lesson plans and writing exercises for TAs, students in each discussion section can be assured they're receiving comparable instruction to those in other sections.

#### Building the course

To create the new textbook, Stahuljak provided Kudu with course notes from previous iterations of the class, along with PowerPoint presentations and YouTube videos she self-produced for remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic. With significant human input and thorough human review of the material, the Kudu platform produced a digital publication that will be available to students for \$25 as part of package that also includes AI tools.

The e-book can also be printed, if needed, and it can be used with audio readers, making content readily accessible for students with disabilities.

Elizabeth Landers, a UCLA doctoral candidate in history, managed the course materials development for Kudu. She said the digital format also enables the textbook to be updated during the quarter if needed — for example, if students request more context about a specific topic, new text, video or images could be uploaded in time for the following class session.

When students ask the AI platform for help on course material, it draws only from resources provided for the class.

The course creation process can take three to four months, Landers said, and Kudu's process calls for professors to spend a maximum of 20 hours on materials development, including reviewing and editing. Kudu compensates them for that time. "The rest of the process is managed by the team at Kudu," Landers said. "We have all of the backend support to understand where the instructors want to go with the material."

For the comparative literature course, content was vetted by Stahuljak and Jakob Johnson, a history major who graduated in 2024.

"What's amazing is that this takes a general education course from being about information overload to being much more about helping students find a through line and key themes over the course of 10 weeks," Landers said. "Now, instead of a professor lecturing about historical facts — because those are all in the textbook — they can instead focus on things like, 'How do we think about this particular text?' and 'How can we think about it differently?' And that's how critical thinking starts to happen."

#### Closed-loop system provides guardrails

When students have questions about course material, they'll have the option of asking Kudu for help. But unlike ChatGPT and other public large-language models, Kudu will draw information only from the resources Stahuljak has uploaded.

"It will only respond based on course content," said Stahuljak, who is the director of the UCLA CMRS Center for Early Global Studies. "So it's there to help our students, but it also reduces the risk of them using ChatGPT to generate their homework assignments."

The system anonymizes the content of students' queries, giving them the freedom to ask questions they might be less inclined to in front of their classmates and professors. That closed-loop system also has the ability to identify writing in students' assignments in which more than half of the content is AI-generated.

#### A UCLA connection

Kudu got its start as a tool for UCLA science courses. That stands to reason: The platform was developed by Alexander Kusenko, a UCLA professor of physics and astronomy, and his former doctoral student Warren Essey. While Stahuljak's course will be Kudu's UCLA Humanities debut, the system is already being used this quarter in a social sciences course, an introductory history class taught by Professor Stefania Tutino.

"Coming from a STEM field, I was surprised to see the extensive and sophisticated use of Kudu tools in the humanities," Kusenko said. "However, now I see that humanities scholars are taking the lead and taking Kudu in an exciting new direction."

Stahuljak already plans to use Kudu for other courses.

"It allows us to spend more time teaching basic analytical skills, critical thinking and reading skills, in a consistent manner — the things professors are best at doing," she said. "Those are hard things to do when you have 300 students in a classroom, but this allows us to do them much better."

Source: <https://newsroom.ucla.edu/stories/comparative-literature-zrinka-stahuljak-artificial-intelligence>.

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\*Note: The catalog version of the course is at:

<https://catalog.registrar.ucla.edu/course/2024/COMLIT2BW>

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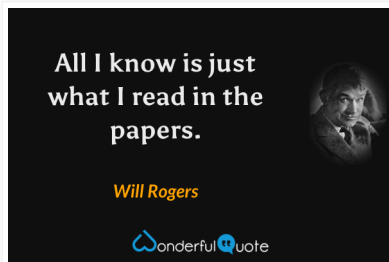
You won't be surprised to learn that there are critics of this development. See:

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/faculty-issues/learning-assessment/2024/12/13/ai-assisted-textbook-ucla-has-some-academics>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments: 

Labels: UCLA

## All I know is what I read in the papers... - Part 2



...in this case, the [Harvard Crimson](#):

Harvard President Alan M. Garber '76 said the turn against higher education in Washington posed a greater threat to the University than anything in recent memory, making his most direct comments yet on Republicans' sweep to power during a closed-door session of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

At the FAS meeting on Dec. 3, Garber said he met with roughly 40 members of Congress during six trips to Washington since becoming president. Garber said he emerged from the conversations convinced there was bipartisan frustration with Harvard and acknowledged that he believes the criticisms contain elements of truth.


Garber's remarks — among his first since President-elect Donald Trump won a second term in the White House — suggest Harvard's leaders are reevaluating their public messaging in the face of an increasingly hostile climate in Washington. During his remarks, Garber said that the University's communications strategy has not worked as well as its leaders had thought...

Full story at <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2024/12/13/garber-trump-harvard-impact/>.

"Not worked as well as its leaders had thought" is probably the understatement of the year. It reminds yours truly of the understatement in Emperor Hirohito's announcement of the surrender of Japan in World War II: "The war situation has developed not necessarily to Japan's advantage."

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\*<https://ahf.nuclearmuseum.org/ahf/key-documents/jewel-voice-broadcast/>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:25 AM No comments: 

Labels: Harvard, politics

Sunday, December 15, 2024

## It's your move, Chancellor Wilcox

On December 11th, an op ed appeared in the [Wall Street Journal](#) titled "UC Riverside's DEI Guardians Came After Me: The university censured me after I spoke out against race taking over the faculty hiring process."\*\* The author was Professor-Emeritus Perry Link, identified by UC-Riverside as a Chancellorial Chair for Teaching Across Disciplines, Ph.D. in East Asian Languages & Civilizations, Harvard University, 1976.\*\*



Prof. Link was recently the subject of a lengthy and laudatory article in the [UCR Magazine](#) which details his expertise in Chinese affairs and how he has been barred from China for his work on behalf of a Chinese dissident scholar.\*\*\*

The Wall St. Journal op ed opens with: *Kim Wilcox, chancellor at University of California, Riverside, wrote me a letter of censure on Aug. 16. I was, in the administration's view, guilty of "discrimination" against "individuals seeking employment." I had made "unwarranted comments" about race. Mr. Wilcox based his claim largely on the following statement, which I had written to colleagues on a faculty search committee in December 2022: "[Candidate X] is lively and charming—and yes, Black, which is great—but I can't say that I found his sophistication and experience up to the level of our top candidates." I expressed my worry that some of my colleagues would, as they had in the past, make the applicant's race their "overriding criterion."*

It then goes on to describe various procedures and tribunals that became involved and the intervention of the chancellor. It closes with:

*As Mr. Wilcox was contemplating his final decision on my case, I offered to visit his office to hear face-to-face his decision and reasoning. He didn't answer. A few months later I got a message from university counsel warning that all of what happened to me is confidential and that my writing about it "may result in discipline."*

By publishing his op ed, it appears that Prof. Link has now written about what happened, despite the warning. So now Chancellor Wilcox, who is due to retire at the end of the academic year, has to respond - or not. His choice. But if he doesn't respond, Prof. Link's version of the events he describes stands as the public record.







### It's your move, Chancellor Wilcox.

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\*<https://www.wsj.com/opinion/uc-riversides-dei-guardians-came-after-me-39d8e26e>.

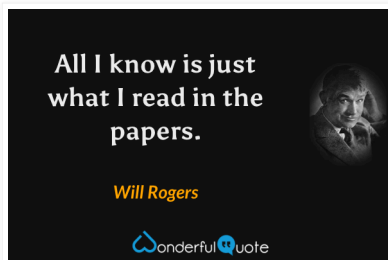
\*\*<https://complitlang.ucr.edu/people/faculty/link/>.

\*\*\*<https://news.ucr.edu/ucr-magazine/winter-2024/the-accidental-dissident>. The article begins: *"Blacklisted by the Chinese Community Party" is a badge of honor Perry Link has worn for almost 30 years. On any night, Link, a UCR professor of comparative literature, may be heard on Voice of America or quoted in The New York Times. He's a leading voice on the human rights violations of the Chinese Communist Party, or CCP. But reducing his role to that of a commentator on the CCP and the dissidence it has inspired does Link an injustice. He played a pro-democracy role in a significant episode of Chinese history, the spring 1989 Tiananmen Square tragedy. In a series of events that could be storyboards in an espionage thriller, Link helped in the escape of the communist party's "public enemy No. 1," the dissident Fang Lizhi. In Link's telling, he never intended any of it — he is an accidental dissident...*

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:35 AM No comments:      

Labels: [academic freedom](#), [diversity](#), [UC-Riverside](#)

## All I know is what I read in the papers...



...in this case, the Wall Street Journal:

*President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to lead the National Institutes of Health wants to take on campus culture at elite universities, wielding the power of tens of billions of dollars in scientific grants.*

*Dr. Jay Bhattacharya, a Stanford physician and economist, is considering a plan to link a university's likelihood of receiving*

*research grants to some ranking or measure of academic freedom on campus, people familiar with his thinking said.*

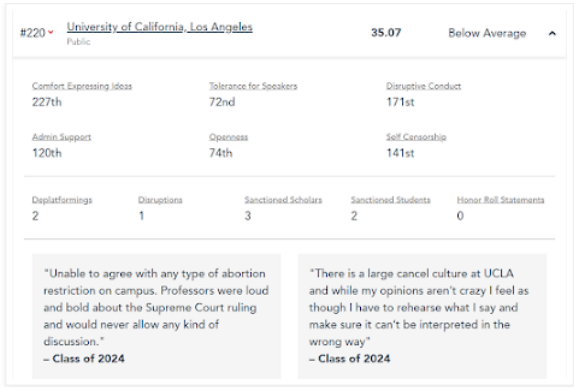
*Bhattacharya, a critic of the Covid-19 response, wants to counter what he sees as a culture of conformity in science that ostracized him over his views on masking and school closures.*

*He isn't yet sure how to measure academic freedom, but he has looked at how a nonprofit called Foundation for Individual Rights in Education [FIRE] scores universities in its freedom-of-speech rankings, a person familiar with his thinking said.*

*The nonprofit scores schools based on a survey of students' perceptions of factors such as whether they feel comfortable expressing ideas. Schools are also penalized if their administrators sanction faculty for opinions or disinvite a speaker from a campus event after a controversy...*

Full story at <https://www.wsj.com/health/healthcare/jay-bhattacharya-national-institute-health-grants-cancel-culture-645101f5>.

In case you are wondering, here is what FIRE says about UCLA, which it ranks as #220 (out of 258):



Source: <https://rankings.thefire.org/rank>.

Explanation of ranking methodology is at <https://rankings.thefire.org/rank/methodology>.

Posted by California Policy Issues at 3:30 AM No comments:

Labels: academic freedom, health care, UCLA

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